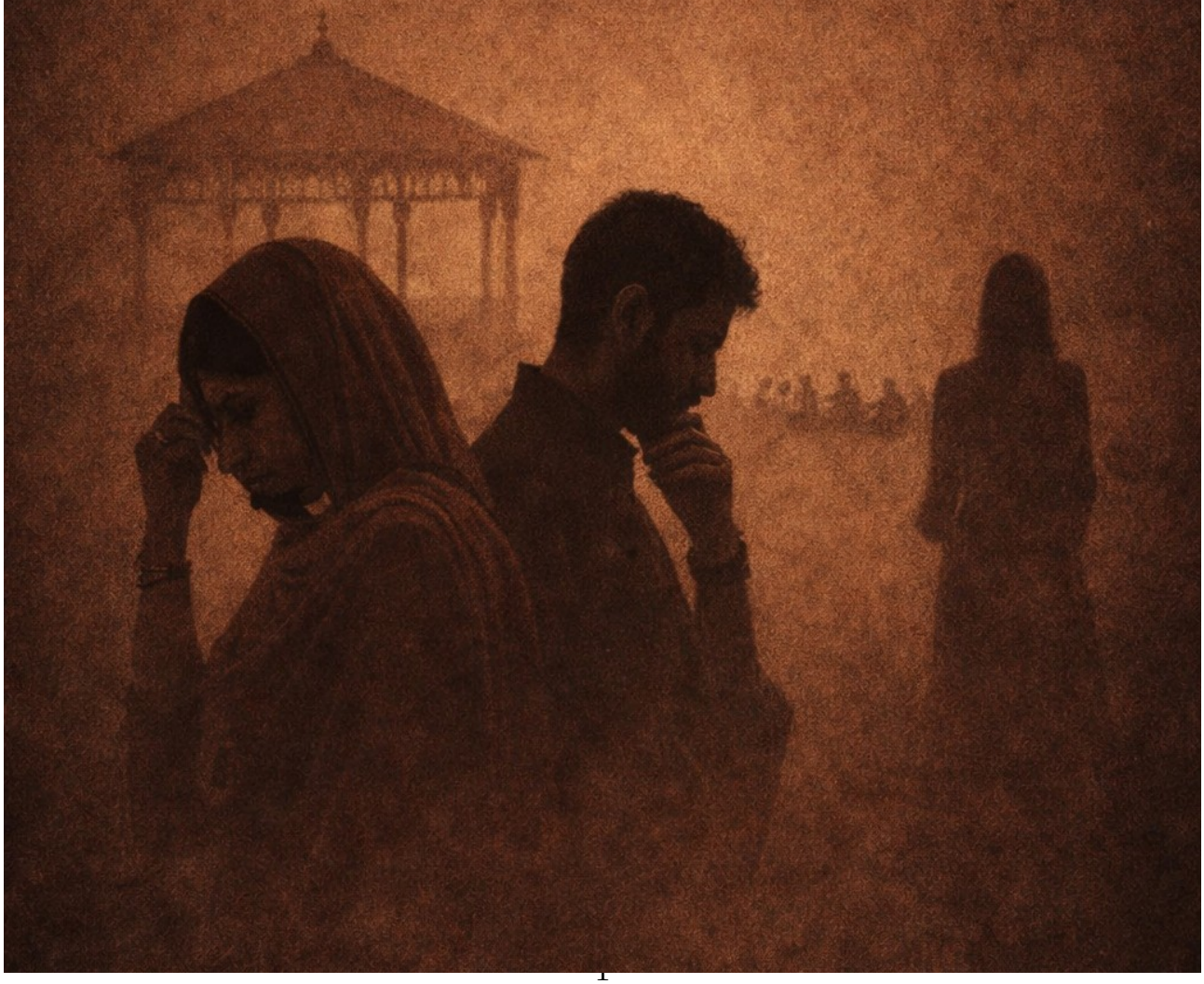
WHAT WILL PEOPLE SAY

A One-Act Play

Ek Noor



What Will People Say

A One-Act Play

Ek Noor

© 2026 Ek Noor
This play is protected by copyright.
It may be read, quoted, and shared for private study and discussion.
No public performance, in whole or in part, may be given without the prior written permission of the author.

For all performance inquiries and licensing requests, please contact:

ek.noor@outlook.com

Disclaimer

This is a work of fiction. Any resemblance to real people, families, or places is purely coincidental.

Character list:

HARRY: The deceased man, his presence is felt only through the letter he leaves behind. He has been in a long-term relationship with Barry.

NIKKI: Early 40s. The niece of the deceased, practical and loyal, caught between honouring Harry's wishes and respecting the family's traditions.

RAJ: Late 30s. Nikki’s younger brother, pragmatic and patriarchal, believes in tradition and authority.

SIMRAN: Mid 30s. Raj's wife, deeply religious and superstitious, concerned about how the family will be judged by the community and fearful of spiritual consequences.

The Letter

The scene takes place in the living room. Tea cups sit on the table. Nikki holds Harry's letter, the family gathered around. Simran sits anxiously, hands clasped, while Raj stands near the window, arms crossed. The air is heavy with the weight of the decision they have to make.

NIKKI: *(quietly, looking at the letter)* The solicitor wants an answer today.

RAJ: Today? He's just died. How is that possible?

NIKKI: *(impatiently, trying to stay calm)* They can't proceed without instructions. His estate, his wishes... it's all tied up in this.

RAJ: *(anxiously)* What's in the letter?

NIKKI: *(stays focused)* Uncle Vicky says the letter isn't legally binding.

RAJ: *(looking confused)* Then... it doesn't matter, right? We don't have to follow it?

NIKKI: *(frustrated, looking at the letter)* It's not about ignoring it. It's his last wish. We have to make a decision.

SIMRAN: *(growing more agitated)* But... what does he want?

(Simran starts pacing, her anxiety increasing. Nikki, clearly trying to stay calm, reads the letter aloud.)

NIKKI: *(reading the first part)* ***I would like a direct cremation. No service. No formal rituals.***

SIMRAN: *(interrupting, eyes wide in shock)* Direct cremation? No service? ***No prayers***? *(voice trembling)* But that's... that's not how we do things!

RAJ: *(also confused, glancing between Nikki and Simran)* Wait, so... no ceremony at all? No prayers, no priest?

NIKKI: *(calmly trying to explain)* Yes. He didn't want any of that. Just the cremation... no service. It's simple.

SIMRAN: *(staring at the floor, horrified)* But that's... how can we ***just*** send him away like that? How can we not pray for him?

NIKKI: *(exasperated, reading more of the letter)* ***If there is a God, He knows my life already. I do not need prayers or ceremonies to prove anything.***

SIMRAN: *(visibly distressed, almost shouting)* ***What***? He doesn't need prayers? *(looks at Nikki in disbelief)* What about the soul? What happens to it if we don't do the prayers? What if God gets angry?

RAJ: *(cutting in, still lost)* But what if... we get it wrong? What if he's wrong? What if he needed the prayers?

NIKKI: *(sighs, trying to explain clearly)* He didn't believe in that. He didn't think he needed them.

(The room is thick with tension. Simran's eyes narrow, and she starts pacing again, more agitated now.)

SIMRAN: *(in a sharp tone, almost blaming Barry directly)* It's ***his*** fault, isn't it? ***Barry*** made him choose this! *(gesturing to the letter)* This is all because of him. He's the one who made Harry turn his back on the way we do things. *(voice growing louder, accusing)*

RAJ: *(defensive, confused)* ***What***? No, it's not Barry's fault. This is Harry's choice.

Barry always cared for him…

(A silence. Even Simran falters.)…

especially when he was very ill towards the end.

SIMRAN: *(shaking her head, furious)* ***No***, Raj! It's because of him... Harry wouldn't have done this if it weren't for ***Barry*****!** *(almost shouting)* This is all because of their... their ***relationship***.

RAJ: *(taken aback, struggling to keep up with her emotional outburst)* Simran, that's not fair. Harry loved him. This is his choice.

SIMRAN: *(spitting out the words)* It's unnatural! And Harry was blinded by it. This... ***this*** is what happens when you let something like that into your life. You lose yourself. You lose your traditions. ***You lose your soul***.

(Simran crosses herself again, clearly struggling with the anger and fear that she's trying to contain.)

SIMRAN: *(more quietly, but still visibly furious)* We can't just do this because ***Barry*** says so. *(turns to Nikki, her voice rising in desperation)* Why didn't you stop him? ***Why didn't anyone stop him?***

NIKKI: *(firmly, but exhausted)* This was Harry's wish, Simran. No one made him do anything.

SIMRAN: *(almost hysterical now)* ***Barry*** made him this way. ***This*** **is** his doing. I knew it. All this time, I knew it. It was just a matter of time before it all fell apart like this.

RAJ: *(quietly, now questioning himself, lost in his own confusion)* I don't know, Simran. I... I don't know what's right any more. ***What are we supposed to do****?*

(The emotional tension is at a boiling point. Simran, now clearly overwhelmed, is speaking more to herself than anyone else.)

SIMRAN: *(quietly, almost to herself)* What if we've angered God? What if we've brought dishonour on him... on ***us***?

RAJ: *(shaking his head, clearly confused and lost in thought)* I... I don't know what to do?

(Nikki reads the next part of the letter, trying to push through the tension.)

NIKKI: *(calmly reading, trying to cut through the chaos)* ***Instead of a service, I would like a gathering in the garden. If the weather permits, a marquee. Photographs of me from childhood until now should be displayed. Let people share memories.***

SIMRAN: *(louder, almost shouting)* A ***gathering***? A ***party*** in his garden? What if the people from our community see this? What if they find out? What will ***my*** parents say?

RAJ: *(still confused, unsure how to respond)* A ***party***? In his garden? People will think we don't care. They'll think we've lost our way.

SIMRAN: *(shaking her head, increasingly agitated)* ***What will people say***?

NIKKI: *(with frustration building, trying to maintain control)* It was his wish. He didn't want the priest. He didn't want a ceremony. He wanted it simple.

SIMRAN: *(grabbing her head, her fear turning into anger)* What if his soul is lost forever?

RAJ: *(growing more confused and unable to cope)* This doesn't feel right. We can't just let him go like this.

NIKKI: *(gently but firmly, finishing the letter aloud)* ***There is no pressure on any of you to attend, but I hope you will. This is my wish, and I trust that you will make peace with it. Do not do this out of fear. Do it because it is what I asked.***

SIMRAN: *(tearfully, pleading now, her voice broken)* What if he's wrong? ***What will people say***? *(voice shaking with fear)* What will my mother say?

RAJ: *(softly, unable to make the decision)* I don't know. I can't decide.

(Simran falls to her knees, her face full of pain. Raj stands at the window, his head down, clearly lost. Nikki looks at them both, her own frustration and sadness rising.)

NIKKI: *(sounding frustrated and almost pleading)* We need your help. *(beat)* ***What are we to do*****?**

(The silence is deafening. No one speaks. The weight of the decision hangs in the air.)

Blackout